

THE REPRESENTATION OF MATURE ADULTS IN TV COMMERCIALS: A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PORTRAYALS IN POLAND AND THE U.S.

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Abstract

- The researchers set out to examine the portrayals of mature adults (55+) in television commercials in Poland and in the United States. It is important to examine the portrayal of this group because they are a lucrative consumer market. Past studies have shown that this particular segment has been often underrepresented and stereotyped. A purposive sample of 15 Polish commercials and 15 U.S. commercials was selected since the researchers wished to focus on particular portrayals rather than analyze a large sample of commercials. Each commercial was examined particularly for the activities performed by the individuals, the social context, health status, gender representation, product/service type, and positive or negative portrayal. In the particular sample, the findings showed that older people play very different roles. Cultural values and differences were evident in the commercials. This could be seen in the content and focus of the ads.

Past Research Studies on the Subject

- Research Studies

Research - Categories

No	categories	answers
1	social context	
2	performed activity	
3	health status	
4	gender	
5	image	
6	race/ethnicity	
7	role	
8	type of the product	

Research – an example from Poland



Table 1. The analysis of the representation of the elderly in a Polish TV commercial for *Opokan* (anti-inflammatory painkiller)

No	categories	answers
1	social context	home/leisure/family
2	performed activity	feeding/walking the dog, taking care of a granddaughter
3	health status	to be improved
4	gender	woman (female)
5	nature of portrayal	positive
6	product/service type	drug
7	race	white
8	role	major

Research – an example from the USA



Table 2. The analysis of the representation of a mature adult in a U.S. Television commercial for *Charles Swab* (investments)

No	category	answers
1	social context	Family
2	performed activity	Spending time with grandchildren
3	health status	Healthy
4	gender	Female
5	nature of portrayal	Positive
6	product/service type	Target
7	race/ethnicity	Caucasian
8	Role (major, minor, background)	Major

Research Results

1	social context					
	family	friends	home	professional	leisure	other
PL	9	1	8	3	6	0
USA	3	0	7	4	10	1

Research Results

2	performed activity			
	PL		USA	
1	having a family dinner at the table	3	Spokesperson explaining trade	2
2	cooking	2	Working in a factory	1
3	taking care of a granddaughter	2	Enjoying time with grandchildren	2
4	presenting the product verbally	2	Running a race	1
5	feeding/walking the dog	1	Watching a baseball game	1
6	yoga meditating	1	Being honored for military service	1
7	doing Nordic walking,	1	Spokesperson talking about dog food w/dog	1
8	building a flying vehicle	1	Reading a book by the pool	1
9	doing experiments in a laboratory	1	Standing by home	2
10	drinking beer in a bar	1	Sitting on the toilet/walking	2
11	taking care of flowers	1	Traveling	2
12	having a barbeque meal outdoor	1	Hugging son coming home from military	1
13	playing a board game with grandchildren	1	Lying in bed at the hospital	1
14	attending a lecture at the university of third age	1	Riding in a taxi	1
15	trying to fall asleep	1	Spying on an investment firm	1
16	giving a car to the son	1	Putting a saddle on a horse	1
17			Gardening	1
18			Playing chess outside	2

Research results

3	health status	
	healthy	to be improved
PL	9	6
USA	24	1

Research results

4	gender		
	male	female	other
PL	6	9	0
USA	14	10	0

Research results

5	image		
	positive	neutral	negative
PL	8	7	0
USA	15	10	0

Research Results

7	role		
	major	minor	background
PL	9	4	1
USA	14	10	0

Research Results

8	Product Type			
	PL		USA	
1	dietary supplement	4	investments	2
2	drugs	4	drugs	3
3	beer	1	phone service	1
4	poultry products	1	washing detergent	1
5	ketchup	1	retail store	1
6	meat brands	1	social media platform	1
7	online loan	1	razor	1
8	incontinence pants for seniors	1	incontinence pants for seniors	1
9			dog food	1
10			hotel	1
11			real estate firm	1
12			hamburger	1

Research Results

9	Race/Ethnicity		
	Caucasian	African-American	Other
PL			
USA	22	3	0

Conclusions

- In Polish TV commercials the mature adults are portrayed in a positive and neutral way
- In U.S.TV commercials the mature adults are portrayed mainly in a positive way.
- In U.S.TV commercials the mature adults are Caucasian with a few being African-American.
- In U.S.TV commercials the mature adults are portrayed as healthy for the most part.
- In U.S.TV commercials the mature adults advertise a wide variety of products.
- In U.S.TV commercials one sees male and female mature adults portrayed.